THE ENCHANTRESS OF WORDS, SOUNDS AND IMAGES

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ANNIVERSARY ESSAYS ON ANN RADCLIFFE (1764-1823)

JAKUB LIPSKI
JACEK MYDLA

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Editors' Preface

The idea for this collection of essays is to celebrate in a scholarly fashion the 250th anniversary of Ann Radcliffe's birthday. 'The Great Enchantress' of the Gothic romance, as her contemporaries re-christened her, was then and has been ever since the publication of her work of fiction an author endowed with exceptional powers of enchantment over words, sounds and images. The contributors to this collection, Polish and French scholars who specialise in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, have found various ways to show not simply that the enduring cultural presence of the Enchantress is well-deserved, but also that it generously rewards renewed attempts by academics to unravel the mysteries of her unique talent.

Let this be an occasion to recall that the first French translations, or perhaps more appropriately adaptations, of Radcliffe's romances appeared as early as the 1790s, and that they were thoroughly enjoyed among the Polish Francophiles and Anglophiles in the Puławy circle, the leading late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultural centre in the then partitioned Poland. We thus consider the Polish-French structure of this collection to be apt and as it were justified by history, given the substantial French contribution to Radcliffe's presence in the Polish literary tradition. Following the Polish novelist Anna Mostowska, one of the first Radcliffe enthusiasts in Poland, we would like to entrust all the chapters that

make up this collection to 'the gloomy ghost of Anna de Radklif.' We encourage the contributors and the readers to join us in this solemn rite.

The chapters vary, as one would expect, in subject matter and approach; collectively they offer a perspective that is sufficiently broad to give the readers a sense of the treasures buried in Radcliffe's fiction, duly preserved in a language that has not ceased to enchant and to puzzle.

We have arranged the content into four parts. Part I addresses Radcliffe's poetics, her verbal aesthetics; this being the main and arguably the most attractive facet of her *oeuvre*. The three essays contained in this part, based on extensive historical and textual research, seek to define Radcliffe's place in eighteenth-century aesthetics by examining and assessing both her debt and her contribution to music and the visual arts. Part II contains chapters that deal with the constructions of identity – of selfhood and otherness – in Radcliffe's fiction. Reflective of the different theoretical backgrounds of the contributors – structuralist, post-structuralist, phenomenological and archetypal – the chapters offer the reader an occasion to meet again and analyse Radcliffe's heroines and villains; moreover, and more intriguingly, they look for traces of the author's presence in her fictions. In all of these analyses, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* has a prominent position and we hope that the reader will be fascinated by how the contributors negotiate the labyrinthine passages of this masterpiece, second only perhaps to the Gothic magnificence of the edifice itself. Part III consists of two chapters; here the contributors re-visit Radcliffe's romances by applying the insights of reception theory. Focusing on their different aspects, the scholars examine how the process of reading was determined by the implied author. Finally, the chapters of Part IV study Radcliffe's contexts and her cultural afterlife in England and in Poland; they bring into focus intertextual links with contemporary Gothicists, literary theorists and travel writers.

If one takes into account how little is known about Radcliffe as an actual person, her hauntingly persistent presence, not only in her fiction and the poetry that embellishes it, but also in the imitations, re-workings and parodies that they inspired, cannot but astonish, perhaps even perplex. All the more so when one

realises how extensive, physically and spiritually, the realms are that the mind of this unassuming and withdrawn woman so eagerly and with such dexterity traversed. If these studies bestow upon the reader a sense of the strengths and licences residing in the literary magic wand and of the skills required capably to wield it, we may say that this collection has fulfilled its purpose, that the effort of the contributors has not been in vain and that of the editors, however humble, unrewarded.

Jakub Lipski

Jacek Mydla

PART I

RADCLIFFE AND THE LANGUAGES OF AESTHETICS

CHAPTER ONE

Ann Radcliffe and the sister arts ideal

Jakub Lipski

In the following chapter I attempt a re-reading of Radcliffe's fictional *oeuvre* in the context of the eighteenth-century debate over the sister arts. The first part speculates about Radcliffe's possible artistic inspirations and offers a brief account of eighteenth-century ideas on the parallels and correspondences between the verbal, the visual and the audible. In the second section I am concerned with Radcliffean heroes and heroines who literally or metaphorically embody the three art forms. Finally, I argue that Radcliffe's novels foreshadow the Romantic ideal of the total work of art uniting literature, music and painting.

Radcliffe and the arts

That Radcliffe's romances should be read as compositions of corresponding art forms becomes clear upon first contact with some of her prose fictions, which are 'interspersed with pieces of poetry.' In her final work, posthumously published *Gaston de Blondeville*, in turn, the beginnings of subsequent chapters are marked with detailed ekphrases of pictures which, we are made to believe, were part of the original medieval manuscript translated by the author. As we delve deeper

into Radcliffe's worlds, it becomes clear that they are constituted not only by words but also by images and even musical notes. Arguably, it is implied that the process of writing is an enterprise undertaken by a multi-skilled and broadly educated author, capable of combining words, sounds and images in order to achieve her artistic effect. Indeed, one does not become a 'mighty magician' or a 'great enchantress' if one's powers of imagination are limited only to strictly literary means of expression.[1]

Radcliffe's artistic education is to a large extent a matter of speculation. If we trust the contents of the obituary written by her husband William, apart from writing, her 'chief delights' were contemplation of landscapes and listening to classical music (see Norton 1999: 29). Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, in turn, represents Radcliffe in his 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mrs Radcliffe' as an avid reader of poetry and novels, a passionate singer of 'exquisite taste' and a 'remarkably sweet voice,' and a frequent visitor at the opera (particularly keen on Handel) and the theatre (deriving the greatest pleasure from Sarah Siddons's performances) (Talfourd 1826: 99). More information is provided by Rictor Norton in the only scholarly biography of Radcliffe to date. Norton devotes much space to accounting for what might have been a formative experience in young Radcliffe's artistic education – her frequent visits and prolonged stays at her uncle Thomas Bentley's, the famous manufacturer and associate of Josiah Wedgewood. As Norton argues, the fact that Bentley wrote an unpublished pamphlet on female education suggests that he would have been interested in his niece's development (Norton 1999: 33). Even if Radcliffe's writings reveal little interest in Bentley & Wedgewood's classical taste, her fascination with the Gothic and the picturesque might be attributed to her uncle's comprehensive studies in these fields during the creation of a dinner service for Catherine the Great. As Norton explains, preparatory works included acquiring 'virtually all available published landscapes, as well as commissioning artists to make original sketches,' as a result of which Radcliffe 'would have been surrounded by countless images of castles, abbeys, ruined towers and sublime and picturesque scenery' (Norton 1999: 34). As regards her literary education, Norton argues for 'an unsystematic reading of imagi-

native literature,' concentrating on Shakespeare, Ariosto, Tasso and pre-Romantic English poets (as is clear from an even cursory analysis of Radcliffe's epigraphs), all of whom were popular choices in contemporary circulating libraries (Norton 1999: 49). Her fascination with Shakespeare, Norton argues, would have been increased by the large set of images collected in the Shakespeare Gallery in Pall Mall, which opened in 1789 (Norton 1999: 73). He develops Talfourd's brief remarks and also sheds light on Radcliffe's musical and theatrical tastes, pointing to Siddons's memorable performances in the late 1780s and the great Handel season in 1791 (Norton 1999: 63). All in all, we may assume, Radcliffe's artistic education fitted into the paradigm of combining literature with the visual and the audible, which stemmed from the sister arts ideal elaborated upon in eighteenth-century aesthetic thought.

According to Nikolaus Schweizer (1972), the idea of the sister arts was one of the favourite subjects among eighteenth-century British thinkers on art and aesthetics. Traditionally, the term was used with reference to poetry and painting, in accord with the Horatian precept *ut pictura poesis* ('as is painting, so is poetry'), and depended on the conviction that just because any artistic endeavour aims at imitating nature, different forms of art are comparable. Throughout the century, there were numerous attempts at drawing parallels (Dubos, Jacob, Harris) or demarcating strict boundaries between the arts (Lessing, Reynolds), and practically every theorist offered an ordering and evaluation of their imitative merits. For my purposes here, a detailed presentation of the debate and its peculiarities is unnecessary, but it will be worthwhile to outline some reflections on the way literature and painting were seen to complement each other in the creation of a powerful artistic effect. These reflections should be seen against the background of eighteenth-century empiricism, which re-defined the role of the senses in acquiring experience and the shaping of consciousness. In his *Parallel between Poetry and Painting* from 1713, Richard Blackmore writes: 'The Painter is a poet to the Eye, and a Poet a Painter to the Ear. One gives us Pleasure by silent Eloquence, the other by vocal Imagery' (quoted after Drake 1811: 33). The paradoxes of the statement and its blurred juxtapositions seem to indicate the idea of completeness

which can be achieved when the two art forms are combined. Similar metaphors can be found in Joseph Trapp's *Lectures on poetry* (1711-5; translated into English by William Bowyer in 1742): 'Poetry is said to paint Things, Painting to describe them. Both give us Draughts of the Body, as well as the Soul' (Trapp 1742: 17). As Ralph Cohen observes, in Trapp's aesthetic thought the two sister arts 'formed a complete example of human experience […], but singly they lacked this completeness' (Cohen 1964: 192). Hildebrand Jacob in his *Of the Sister Arts* declares that neither of the sister arts can 'well be explain'd, without giving some Insight into the other at the same Time' (Jacob 1734: 3), and adds that '[t]he nearer the Poet approaches to the Painter, the more perfect he is; and the more perfect the Painter, the more he imitates the Poet' (Jacob 1734: 4).

As a matter of fact, Jacob's essay concentrated on three rather than two sister arts. The status of music as the third sister art was controversial due to its problematic status as a mimetic art and generally largely non-semantic nature. In the eighteenth century, however, there were attempts to treat it on a par with literature and painting, and one of the first to theorise about music as one of the sister arts was Jean-Baptiste Dubos. In his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719, translated into English by Thomas Nugent in 1748, quite tellingly as *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*) Dubos writes:

> men have invented [music], in order to add a new strength to poetry, and to render it capable of making a greater impression. Wherefore as the painter imitates the strokes and colors of nature, in like manner the musician imitates the tones, accents, sighs, and inflexions of the voice; and in short all those sounds, by which nature herself expresses her sentiments and passions. These […] have a surprising power of moving us, by reason of their being signs instituted by nature, from whence they receive their energy; whereas articulate words are arbitrary signs of passions, and draw their signification and value from human institution […]. (Dubos 1748: 360-1)

Dubos's aim is to situate music among other mimetic arts, which would legitimate it as an equally valid form. However, worth noting here is his attempt to vindicate it as the art which can most successfully move the recipient, especially in comparison with the arts that depend on arbitrary words. Given his Aristotelian per-

spective, central to Dubos' thinking on art is its ability to affect the addressee, and he identifies this potential not only in music but also in poetry and painting: 'That a sensible pleasure arises from poems and pictures, is a truth we are convinced of by daily experience' (Dubos 1748: 1). This function of the sister arts, as well as the indiscernible (at times) boundary between nature and art, lie at the core of Radcliffe's aesthetics, which I will discuss later on.

The idea that music imitates nature was also present in the work of other writers on aesthetics. In the second part of his influential *Three Treatises* from 1744 – *A Discourse on Music, Painting and Poetry* – James Harris writes:

> […] in the *Natural* or *Inanimate World*, Music may imitate the Glidings, Murmurings, Tossings, Roarings, and other *Accidents of Water*, as perceived in Fountains, Cataracts, Rivers, Seas, etc.——The same of Thunder—the same of Winds, as well the stormy as the gentle.——In the *Animal World*, it may imitate the *Voice* of some Animals, but *chiefly* that of singing Birds.——It may also *faintly copy* some of their *Motions*.—In the *Human Kind*, it can also imitate some *Motions* and *Sounds*; and of Sounds those *most perfectly*, which are expressive of *Grief* and *Anguish*. (Harris 1765: 66-7)

Following this enumerative account is a comparison between music and painting as mimetic arts, which is clearly unfavourable to the former. As Harris puts it, imitation in music is 'at best […] an imperfect thing' (Harris 1765: 69). At the same time, however, the writer implies that its merits are to be found elsewhere. In Chapter 6 of this part, he focuses '*On Music considered not as an* Imitation' and argues that 'there are various *Affections*, which may be raised by the Power of *Music*. There are Sounds to make us *chearful*, or *sad*; *martial*, or *tender*; and so of almost every other Affection, which we feel.' He continues that even though sounds cannot directly represent ideas, they may express them by virtue of associations. As a result, the ideas conveyed through poetry 'make the most sensible Impression' when music raises associated affections. Consequently, when poetry is accompanied by suitable music, the effect on the recipient is 'irresistible, and penetrates into the deepest Recesses of the Soul' (Harris 1765: 99-100; italics in

the original). In a way, Harris inaugurates a debate on the expressive merits of music, as compensating for its representational limits.

The idea of music as a mimetic art was questioned in the work by Charles Avison entitled *An Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), which argued for the precedence of 'expression' in any debate on the power of music. Importantly, Avison develops Harris's ideas on the associational, much more than imitative, character of sounds and puts emphasis on the power of music over the recipient's imagination and passions. In this, Avison writes, music is not inferior to painting: 'A *full Chord* struck, or a beautiful Succession of *single Sounds* produced, is no less ravishing to the Ear, than just Symetry or exquisite Colours to the Eye' (Avison 1752: 2; italics in the original).[2] Later, in turn, he adds that it 'pour[s] in upon the Mind, a silent and serene Joy, beyond the Power of Words to express' (Avison 1752: 3), thus questioning the traditional hierarchy of the sister arts which typically considered painting and poetry as superior to music. Arguably, Avison provided Radcliffe with a number of ideas on how to incorporate music into her poetics of terror:

> Thus Music, either by imitating these various Sounds [i.e. the Noise of Thunder, the Shouts of War, the uproar of an Enraged Ocean], in due Subordination to the Laws of Air and Harmony, or by any other Method of Association, bringing the Objects of our Passions before us (especially when these Objects are determined, and made as it were visibly, and intimately present to the Imagination by the Help of Words) does naturally raise a Variety of Passions in the human Breast […] (Avison 1752: 4)

In a passing parenthetical note, Avison defines the core of Radcliffe's aesthetics: the effect of the arts on the recipient is the most powerful when the different means of imitation and expression work together. At the same time, the critic recognises the synesthetic dimension of the sister arts ideal: when music is assisted by words, the objects imitated and conjured up by means of association are, as if it were, 'visible.' That Radcliffe knew and read Avison's *Essay* is not just speculation, as there is a direct reference to the critic in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (see Norton 1999: 78-9).

The sister arts embodied

The way Talfourd represented Radcliffe in his 'Memoirs' might indeed have reflected the personality of the Great Enchantress; most certainly, however, it was a reflection of late eighteenth-century ideas on female genius, which Radcliffe herself helped to codify. The ideal was a modified version of the Enlightenment model of femininity, which depended on the practice of the arts (such as writing journals, drawing, singing and playing musical instruments) in order to soothe and cultivate the female mind. The culture of sensibility developed this educational pattern and not only highlighted the importance of the arts for personal education but also recognised the poly-sensory pleasures to be derived from both practice and reception. Aesthetic experience was considered to be a communication channel uniting sensible souls. Both these paradigms, however appreciative of the merits of the sister arts themselves, revolved around social conventions and proprieties. Neither the arts themselves nor their contribution to one's personal growth were the primary objective; instead, the ultimate goal was conformity to a socially accepted mode of conduct (needless to say, artistic education was one of the central themes of conduct books for women throughout the long eighteenth century). Radcliffe's fiction, still grounded in the Age of Reason and the culture of sensibility but opening the doors to Romanticism, both reflects and transcends these paradigms in offering a new consideration of the power of genius in artistic practices.

The different tendencies are most clearly noticeable in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), where the sister arts are embodied by two sisters, Emilia and Julia, who devote themselves to drawing and music respectively, being both avid readers of literature. Their education is a task undertaken by their guardian and distant relative Madame de Menon, who herself unites the three arts: 'Madame excelled in music and drawing. She had often forgot her sorrows in these amusements, when her mind was too much occupied to derive consolation from books' (SR 4). Madame de Menon represents the older generation, for whom artistic education was a way to appropriateness, in social terms, and tranquillity, in personal. Her educational agenda, we read, is to 'counteract' those traits in her 'young pupils' that

rebel against the Enlightenment ideal – excessive sensibility and vivid imagination (SR 4). The reasonable Emilia, possessing a 'mild and sweet temper' as well as 'a clear and comprehensive mind' (SR 4), cannot be much of a challenge to her tutor, as she fits perfectly into the expected standard of femininity. The heroine Julia, in turn, is the one who is given the most complex treatment and thus the one who is beyond conduct-book proprieties:

> An extreme sensibility subjected her to frequent uneasiness; her temper was warm, but generous; she was quickly irritated, and quickly appeased, and to a reproof, however gentle, she would often weep, but was never sullen. Her imagination was ardent, and her mind early exhibited symptoms of genius. (SR 4)

The sketch underlines three aspects of Julia's personality which give a new dimension to her practice of the arts: sensibility, imagination and genius. The unity of the three is the core of the Radcliffean ideal of female genius, which corresponded to new ideas on the role of the artist in the Romantic period. Julia's talent for music, we read, does not rely on the observance of rules ('intricacies of execution') but 'in that delicacy of taste, and in those enchanting powers of expression, which seem to breathe a soul through the sound' (SR 4-5). Through this presentation of Julia, Radcliffe alludes to those eighteenth-century ideas on music that highlighted its expressive character. Expression, rather than representation, is here inextricably related to genius. Julia does not represent nature, but nevertheless, she abandons herself to art especially when contemplating beautiful natural scenery. Her music, and the poetry she sings, complement the beauty of nature, which is, in turn, represented in pictorial terms (see Noske 1981: 167-8). Such a unity of the sister arts can be observed in the following passage:

> One evening she took her lute to a favorite spot on the seashore, and resigning herself to a pleasing sadness, touched some sweet and plaintive airs. The purple flush of evening was diffused over the heavens. The sun, involved in clouds of splendid and innumerable hues, was setting o'er the distant waters, whose clear bosom glowed with rich reflection. The beauty of the scene, the soothing murmur of the high trees, waved by the light air which overshadowed her, and the soft shelling of the waves that flowed gently in upon the shores, insensibly sunk her mind into a state of repose. She

> touched the chords of her lute in sweet and wild melody, and sung the following ode […]. (SR 42)

Even if the represented scenery lacks a typically Radcliffean frame, it is given a clearly painting-like colouring – 'the purple flush' and 'splendid and innumerable hues' – bringing to mind Claude Lorrain's multi-coloured seascapes. As is frequently the case with Radcliffe's ekphrastic passages, 'the beauty of the scene' is made complete with the comforting sounds of nature, which lead the heroine into a state of reverie. In response to this natural union of the visual and the audible, Julia takes up her lute and sings a piece of poetry which itself elaborates on the unity between sounds (the murmuring of waves, the sweet notes from the shepherd's flute) and images (the tints of twilight, wild and fantastic visions). Importantly, the poem sung by Julia suggests that the poly-sensory pleasures derived from the experience of sounds and images in nature, as well as from one's artistic activity, lead the sensible subject into a world beyond reality: 'To Fancy's eye fantastic forms appear' (SR 43). These enchanting powers of words, sounds and images reveal themselves also in other fictions.

Similarly, though less explicitly and without the educational agenda, the sister arts are embodied by Osbert and Mary, the siblings in Radcliffe's first published work, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789). About Osbert we read:

> His warm imagination directed him to poetry, and he followed where she led […] He delighted in the terrible and in the grand, more than in the softer landscape; and, wrapt in the bright visions of fancy, would often lose himself in awful solitudes. (CAD 5)

Clearly the visual and the poetic permeate each other: poetry leads Osbert to 'the romantic scenes of the Highlands,' which, in turn, inspire him 'with all the enthusiasm of his favourite art.' Analogically to Julia, Osbert treats visual pleasure and poetic activity as a way to a better world: at one point we read that ceasing to contemplate a landscape is for him tantamount to being 'awakened to […] distressing reality' (CAD 6). Mary, in turn, is the one who devotes herself to music. We read that she touches the lute 'with an exquisite expression' and sings (poems com-

posed by her brother) 'in a voice whose tones floated on the air in soft undulations' (CAD 92-3). One romantic scene of wordless communication between Mary and her beloved Alleyn highlights the enchanting powers of visual and audible sensations as they permeate each other. It begins with Alleyn contemplating a portrait of Mary which hangs in the northern gallery of Athlin. The painting reveals a striking resemblance to the original and is capable of expressing her 'winning grace' (CAD 92). It is thus a frequent cause of the hero's sighs and tears, which he restrains in Mary's actual presence due to social proprieties.[3] As Alleyn abandons himself to 'melancholy musing' inspired by the painting, the visual sensations are enriched by 'the notes of sweet music' and the words of poetry. 'Entranced in the sweet sounds,' the hero walks towards the source until he perceives Mary through a door frame (CAD 94). For some time, the hero, 'absorbed in mute admiration,' observes the heroine 'hanging over her lute,' while she, in turn, is unaware of his presence (CAD 94). As the object of a one-sided gaze, Mary is metaphorically equated with the previously admired pictorial representation, and the door frame through which she is contemplated by Alleyn is by no means without significance. For both lovers the experienced sensations are a gateway to an alternative world: the union of the visual and the audible 'entrance[s]' Alleyn, whereas to Mary, being interrupted by Alleyn's sigh is like 'being recalled […] to reality' (CAD 94).

Even though the arts are clearly romanticised in the figures of Osbert and Mary, their educational role is reflected in Mary's future sister-in-law Laura, who has received thorough instruction in the three arts from her mother, the imprisoned Baroness Malcolm. As we read, 'The progress which she made in music and drawing, and in the lighter subjects of literature […] pleased the Baroness, who was her sole instructress' (CAD 65). Nevertheless, Laura transcends these proprieties and reveals a tinge of genius. She touches the lute 'with exquisite sensibility' (CAD 65) and possesses a voice 'enchantingly tender and melodious' (CAD 18). In fact, when Laura's husband-to-be Osbert first hears her play and sing when he is imprisoned in the castle of Dunbayne, he believes the sounds to have

supernatural provenance – they seem to be 'sent by Heaven,' as they deter him from committing suicide (CAD 18).

In *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), a number of poems which 'intersperse' the text are authored and sung by the heroine Adeline, who finds her inspiration in the works of 'the great Author of Nature,' which offers an abundance of colours and sounds (RF 22-3). Similarly to Julia from *A Sicilian Romance*, Adeline is explicitly endowed with the ideal she represents – 'she had genius' (RF 29), we read – and gives free rein to 'her imagination in spite of her reason' (RF 33). As is typical of Radcliffe's troubled heroines, Adeline finds consolation in the arts, which help her metaphorically to escape the distressing reality:

> La Motte's books were her chief consolation. With one of these she would frequently ramble into the forest, where the river, winding through a glade, diffused coolness, and with its murmuring accents, invited repose: there she would seat herself, and, resigned to the illusions of the page, pass many hours in oblivion of sorrow. (RF 34-5)

Reading, admiring the scenery and delighting in the murmuring sounds of nature, the heroine 'woo[s] the gentle muse, and indulge[s] in ideal happiness,' the effect of which is a short poem ('To the visions of fancy') praising the 'creative mind' as a faculty capable of artfully combining both gentle and thrilling sounds, and producing a variety of colours (RF 35).

At one point she is befriended by Clara la Luc, her sister-in-law to be, who, it turns out, practises all the three art forms: 'From being delighted with the observance of nature, she grew pleased with seeing her finely imitated, and soon displayed a taste for poetry and painting' (RF 249). We read later that she turns to her father's library to study these two art forms, and in her pursuits is additionally 'assisted by some instruction from her brother' (RF 249). Her musical talents, on the other hand, are not as systematised, though with no disadvantage to her: 'She knew nothing of the intricacies of execution; her airs were simple, and her style equally so, but she soon gave them a touching expression, inspired by the sensibility of her heart, which seldom left those of her hearers unaffected' (RF 249). The passage juxtaposes 'the intricacies of execution,' an idea suggestive of ra-

tional craftsmanship, with 'a touching expression,' which clearly defines Clare as a romantic female genius rather than a well-educated performer.

Just as its representation of the female genius follows the convention established in *A Sicilian Romance*, the novelty of *The Romance of the Forest* lies in recognition of the potentially ominous character of the sister arts and their enchanting powers. When Adeline is kidnapped and transported to the Marquis the Montalt's villa, the excessive decor of the place – including frescoes representing the works of Ovid and Tasso, as well as sculptures of renowned poets – makes it resemble 'the palace of a fairy,' while the artworks appear to be 'the works of enchantment' (RF 156). So far in the book, the world beyond reality offered by the arts has carried exclusively positive connotations and played the role of a utopian space of freedom from earthly concerns, but here, as Adeline feels herself, its 'charm' is thought of as a means to 'lure [her] to destruction' (RF 157). Its temptations are even stronger when accompanied by the 'entrancing sounds' of chamber music, to whose 'sweet magic' Adeline 'gradually yield[s]' (RF 157). Arguably, the episode implies that the subjective world of romantic fancy and female genius will never become a successful shelter from the Gothic world of oppression; on the contrary, it provides yet another area of susceptibility which can be duly taken advantage of by means of villainous practices of dissimulation and appropriation.

Similarly tempting is the Venetian villa of Montoni, where Emily St. Aubert, the heroine of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), is at one point forcefully conducted. Emily arrives at the villa in a barge, having marvelled at the 'enchanting shores' of the city (MU 174) and the festivities of the Venetian Carnival, which have made Venice appear as a fairyland to the heroine. Affected by its magic, the heroine finds herself in a large house which reveals surprising 'magnificence':

> The walls and ceiling were adorned with historical and allegorical paintings, in *fresco*; silver tripods, depending from chains of the same metal, illumined the apartment, the floor of which was covered with Indian mats painted in a variety of colours and devices; the couches and drapery of the lattices were of pale green silk, embroidered and fringed with green and gold. (MU 176)

There are, as it were, two dimensions to this passage. On the one hand, Montoni's salon offers a variety of sensual pleasures resulting from an interplay of art forms, lights, colours and materials; on the other hand, the clear spatial outline, with the mention of walls, ceiling and floor enclosing the enchanted heroine, is suggestive of its true function – that of confinement. Like almost any prison space in Radcliffe, the villa offers a view of the outside world: 'Balcony lattices opened upon the grand canal, whence rose a confusion of voices and of musical instruments, and the breeze that gave freshness to the apartment' (MU 176-7). Music, like a breath of fresh air, enlivens the space occupied by the heroine, who has become 'charmed with every thing she saw' (MU 177). Emily's susceptibility to visual and audible sensations results from her natural genius and artistic education, a mention of which had defined her character already at the beginning of the novel:

> Adjoining the eastern side of the green-house […] was a room, which Emily called hers, and which contained her books, her drawings, her musical instruments […] Here she usually exercised herself in elegant arts, cultivated only because they were congenial to her taste, and in which native genius, assisted by the instructions of Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert, made her an early proficient. (MU 3)

Like other heroines, Emily best exercises her talents when confronted with the beauties of nature. In fact, the room of Emily's own is not only a space for artistic practices; it is also where she keeps her 'favourite birds and plants' and where there are windows offering views of the Garonne valley, enriched by dancing peasants and their 'sprightly melodies' (MU 3).

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* the practice of the sister arts is not only an expression of genius but also a communication channel between lovers. Emily's kindred spirit and lover Valancourt matches her talents in sounds and words, and the heroine has the tendency to metonymically link enchanting visions, words and sounds to Valancourt throughout the narrative. For example, as she abandons herself to admiration of the fairyland outside Montoni's villa – a variety of voices, tones, musical instruments, costumes 'defy[ing] all description,' words from

Ariosto and Petrarch – her imagination leads her 'far away to France and to Valancourt' (MU 177).

The thoughts inspired by such sensations make the heroine wonder about the world beyond reality. While observing the 'fantastic splendour' of the Carnival procession on the Grand Canal, which 'appeared like the vision of a poet suddenly embodied,' Emily dreams about 'throw[ing] off the habit of mortality' and becoming a sea-nymph (MU 178).

In *The Italian* (1796-7), the heroine Ellena Rosalba is first introduced to her lover Vivaldi through her voice. He does not even see her face, which is covered by a veil, and thus must settle for '[t]he sweetness and fine expression of her voice […] which had a distinguished air of delicacy and grace,' and which indicated 'all the sensibility of character' (I 5). She also plays the lute and does so 'with most affecting and delicate expression' capable of entrancing Vivaldi (I 11). As it turns out in the course of the narrative, Ellena devotes herself to the visual arts, too. She 'passe[s] whole days in embroidering silks' (I 9), which proves to be a profitable enterprise supporting both herself and her aunt Signora Bianchi, and excels, displaying 'exquisite grace,' in drawing. Though she does not produce literary works, the heroine appears to be an avid reader of imaginative words. When imprisoned in the convent of San Stefano, Ellena finds consolation in the books she receives from her ally Olivia: 'she seated herself at a window, and, with a volume of Tasso, endeavoured to banish every painful remembrance from her mind' (I 94-5). Reading her favourite Italian poet, the heroine enters the world of fancy and at least for some time becomes freed from earthly concerns: 'She continued wandering in the imaginative scenes of the poet, till the fading light recalled her to those of reality' (I 95).

Ellena is literally framed as an embodiment of the arts when Vivaldi has the first chance to thoroughly observe her from a place of concealment in the garden of the villa Altieri. He first is lured to the spot by the words of a Marian hymn sung by the heroine to the accompaniment of a lute. This is enough to 'entrance' the hero, who then attempts to 'discover the object of his admiration' (I 11). The 'object' appears in a lattice as she concludes her worship at a personal altar.

Vivaldi's gaze freezes the heroine in the process of rising from the altar; thus framed and immobilised, Ellena is given a careful picture-like representation:

> the glow of devotion was still upon her countenance as she raised her eyes, and with a rapt earnestness fixed them on the heavens. She still held the lute, but no longer awakened it, and seemed lost to every surrounding object. Her fine hair was negligently bound up in a silk net, and some tresses that had escaped it, played on her neck, and round her beautiful countenance, which now was not even partially concealed by a veil. The light drapery of her dress, her whole figure, air, and attitude, were such as might have been copied for a Grecian nymph. (I 11-2)

Absorbed in prayer and music, with her eyes fixed on heaven and the glow in her countenance, Ellena is arguably a transfiguration of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music and an archetypal female artist, who was painted by both Domenichino and Guido Reni – painters explicitly referred to by Radcliffe in her works (MU 377 and I 86 respectively).[4]

The novel as the total artwork

The posthumously published *Gaston de Blondeville* (1826) is a rather non-standard work in the context of Radcliffe's previous fiction. It modifies several of the conventions that underpinned the romances published earlier: the supernatural is no longer comprehensively explained; anti-Catholic overtones are moderated; male rather than female innocence is persecuted; and, most importantly for my purposes here, the sister arts are not embodied by particular characters but by the novel form as such. That is, as the work pretends to be a translation of a medieval manuscript, each chapter begins with a detailed ekphrasis of a drawing supposedly ornamenting the original text. The pictures represent key scenes in successive chapters and are animated and given a temporal dimension in the narratives that follow. Meticulous and purely descriptive passages opening the chapters are thus juxtaposed with vivid narrative accounts, which suspend the progress of the plot and enthral the reader with an abundance of forms and colours. The evident superiority of these animated scenes over the epigraphic descriptions is to be attributed not only to the temporal dimension but also to auditory embellishments,

which make the static descriptions transcend the confinements of pictorial art. For example, a rather simplistic account of the first drawing – representing the King and Queen's pompous arrival at Kenilworth interrupted by the protagonist Hugh Woodreeve's appearance – fades in comparison with the ensuing narrative of the procession; a symphony of sounds (produced by trumpets, pipes, horns, bugles as well as 'stringed instruments with most sweet noise' [GB 30]), colours and lively countenances, reminiscent of the excessive parades in Italian quattrocento painting.

Gaston de Blondeville, I would argue, reflects Radcliffe's understanding of the sister arts ideal, which so far has been only implied. If her starting point is always the image and its literary representation (i.e. ekphrasis), the ultimate effect is amplified by the temporal and auditory dimensions, which do not exist in painting. This is what is achieved through her heroines, who embody the three arts, and through her fictionalised imagery of Salvator Rosa, Gaspard Dughet and Claude Lorrain, which she endows with motion and sounds. In this, she seems to have taken part in the debate concerning the ordering of the sister arts. Even though she would have subscribed to the enthusiasts of the image, Radcliffe is nevertheless aware of its limits, and proposes to enrich the visual with the two categories recognised as the domains of literature and music – temporality/motion and expression respectively. The effect is a form of narrative art which exploits the potential of language to represent the visual and the audible; a series of animated images mediated through verbal means. Reading 'mother Radcliff,' as Keats dubbed her (see Townshend and Wright 2014: 22), would have been a formative experience for English Romantics. I have attempted to demonstrate that one significant aspect of her multi-faceted contribution to the development of European Romanticism was the understanding of the novel as a total work of art uniting literature, music and painting, which may have left an imprint[5] on the minds of such advocates of the synthesis of the arts as Coleridge, Keats and Byron, all avid readers of Radcliffe. I do not suppose this is what Talfourd had in mind, but I would willingly subscribe to his opinion of Radcliffe as 'the inventor of a new style of romance' (Talfourd 1826: 105).

By way of conclusion, let me address one puzzling question: if Radcliffe's novels are to be taken as a series of animated images, how does one explain the surprisingly scanty visual heritage of the Great Enchantress? The corpus of Radcliffean illustrations is meagre in comparison with that of other notable eighteenth-century novelists; there are hardly any paintings inspired by her work (eighteenth-century painters delighted in illustrating Shakespeare; why would they not turn to 'the Shakspeare [sic] of Romance Writers?'[6]); finally, if the contents of the Internet Movie Database are to be trusted, there has been only one film adaptation of her fiction – *Le confessional des pénitents noirs*, a 1977 TV mini-series based on *The Italian*. Why would Radcliffe's words, sounds and images largely fail to assume visual form? According to Todorov (1975), the literary fantastic is a realm of blurred boundaries between the material and the non-material. The Enchantress's worlds vacillate between these two realms, being, as Talfourd aptly noticed, 'equally distinct from the old tales of chivalry and magic, and from modern representations of credible incidents and living manners' (Talfourd 1826: 105-6). Her poetics is a poetics of the in-between, both magical and realistic. This in-betweenness is indicated whenever her heroes and heroines, and her readers too, become 'entranced,' 'charmed' or 'enchanted' by the workings of words, sounds and images. Any visual adaptation of a literary work is a kind of interpretation and concretisation, largely depriving the text of its original ambiguity and openness. There is, therefore, no point – I would argue – in visually concretising what at its core depends on limitless possibilities; no point in forcing the Enchantress to lose her charm.

Notes

1 This is what she was called by James Leigh Hunt (in *Men, Women, and Books* from 1847) and Thomas de Quincey (in the revised version of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* from 1856) respectively (see Townshend and Wright 2014: 30-1)

2 As Devendra Varma notes, Radcliffe's use of the interplay of sound and silence is analogous to the effect of light and shade she would admire in the paintings of her favourite Salvator Rosa (Varma 1957: 146).

3 Joe Bray adopts a slightly different stance on the scene and argues that it illustrates the blurred "boundary between representation and reality" (Bray 2014: 41).
4 To read more on this scene and on Radcliffe's iconography of sainthood, see Alice Labourg's essay in this book (Chapter Two).
5 As Stabler points out, Byron used the very same metaphor in accounting for his Radcliffean inspirations (in particular, as regards the image of Venice): "[Radcliffe and others] Had stamped her image in me" (Stabler 2014: 186).
6 This is how Nathan Drake praised Radcliffe in his *Literary Hours: Or Sketches Critical and Narrative* (1798: 249).

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